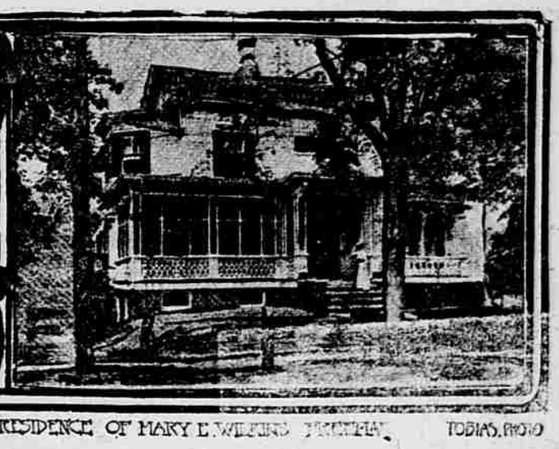
MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN at Home at Metuchen, N. J.

L. A. SHAFER



RESIDENCE OF MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN. TOBIAS, PHOTO

TOBIAS, PHOTO

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN

TOBIAS, PHOTO

LIBRARY AND WORKING ROOM

RECEPTION ROOM

MRS. FREEMAN AND HER FAVORITE CAT, "PRISCILLA ALDEN."

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC

In this topsy-turvy literary world, where princes write of peasants and queens romance about dairy maids; where society women scribble learnedly about everything under the sun of which they are supposed by tradition to know nothing, and where gentlewomen go forth in the garments of toil, with pins in pocket, wherewith they may, for sociological purposes, lay bare the lives of their fellow workers in factory and shop—in these topsy-turvy days Mary E. Wilkins herself, her books, her house, and, above all else, the "literary life" as she lives it in the seclusion of a New Jersey village, are almost phenomenal.

In other words, Mary E. Wilkins is a disappointment, in that her most unsophisticated reader may not find one inconsistency.

To begin, there is the village itself.

Metuchen is a perfect type of the small town so familiar to Miss Wilkins's readers.

It is just such a placid, sleepy, sweet-scented country town as she loves to place her slender heroines in.

As one passes through the quiet streets, shaded by big trees and greenswarded on either side, one can well imagine that Miss Wilkins's Amandas and Belindas and Jerushas are peering out from behind the close drawn blinds, wondering who the stranger is.

One can easily imagine that this is Evalina's garden, this big, sloping plot to the side of a small white cottage.

The fragrance of the lilacs, the scarlet of the japonica, the fresh, tender green of the hop vines—surely this is Evalina's garden!

Through this dreamy bit of story-book land, lilac breathing and musical with the pipings of spring birds, the cabman rattles us ruthlessly, without emotion, and blissfully ignorant of the real fame of the woman to whose house his "fares" are destined.

"Yes, Mrs. Freeman's a mighty fine lady," he comments.

"She had to be or she'd never been able to get Doctor Freeman. I tell you, Doctor Freeman's a mighty fine man—mighty few ladies good enough for him."

Here the young jehu stopped to point out some of the civic glories of Metuchen, and it was with difficulty that he was brought back to the more interesting subject.

"He didn't get her down here, though," he went on to explain.

"No, she lived up in New England somewhere, and used to come down in summer time to visit Mr. Alden.

"He lives over that way"—flourishing his whip.

"Mr. Alden is an editor or something to do with a newspaper or books.

"I don't just know, only they say he makes heaps of money, and they say Mrs. Freeman used to write pieces for his paper, and that's how they got to know each other."

We were now in sight of Doctor Freeman's home, a roomy white frame cottage with a queer little veranda in front. The cabman nodded his head.

KEPT THE DOCTOR WAITING TWO YEARS.

"Do you know," he said, with a sigh of exasperation; "do you know that woman kept the doctor waiting two years after he got this house all ready for her?

"Women's all alike, whether they be from New England or Jersey."

And with this bitter reflection he rattled away and left the interviewer to the manipulation of an electric bell.

The door is wide open, for it is very warm even in Metuchen on this bright May morning, but between the visitor and sanctity of the author's home there is the barrier of a screen door.

Out of the shadowy recesses there comes an occasional "clitter-clatter" of dishes and the quick, nervous staccato of a typewriting machine.

While the "hired girl" is "tidying" herself one has a chance to let the eyes wander over the neatly clipped lawn, with its flower beds, and into the long glass-inclosed room to the side, where a teatable is spread among the fuchsias and cinerarias.

At last the clish-clash of china ceases and a negro girl in white apron appears.

She is most uncertain, most mysterious, entirely noncommittal regarding the whereabouts of her distinguished mistress.

Closing the screen door carefully and hooking it once more, she disappears in the direction of the typewriter's incessant tick-tack, which soon ceases.

But only for a moment, and then it begins fast and furious. The negro girl comes back and unlocks the screen door. She is all smiles and cordiality as she ushers me in.

"Mis' Freeman's arful busy, she is; but she says she'll be down in a few minutes," the girl explains, leading me into the parlor and inviting me to find a seat among the quaint old-fashioned red velvet furniture. It is just such a room as her most ardent admirer might design as a setting for Mary E. Wilkins.

Big and spacious and well furnished, nothing in it too new; no attempt whatever at so-called "artistic" effect.

Just an old-fashioned parlor, where folk used to plain living and high thinking might find sweet solace and comfortable chairs and where they might indulge in the gentle art of conversation on any subject whatever, from the planting of red cabbage to New England transcendentalism.

Emerson, Thoreau, Holmes, Browning and a half score of others smile benignantly in their frames from the tops of book shelves, and the big center table is covered with books, new and old.

The typewriter is still once more, a frou-frou of skirts on the stairs and Mrs. Mary Wilkins-Freeman enters—a plump, pleasant lady, with vivacious blue eyes and fluffy blond hair.

She wears a dark blue tailor-made gown and the hand she extends is as small as a child's.

It is a compliment to Mrs. Freeman to describe her as a woman who looks utterly innocent of ever having written.

This appearance was further accentuated by the conversation which followed.

"I am rather upset this morning," the author of "A Portion of Labor" began. "I've just got a new cook, and she hasn't got her hand turned yet to the work.

"One does have such a time to keep a good cook, anyway, here in the country. I'm without one half the time. I really don't know what we housekeepers are going to do."

She is very serious, Miss Wilkins is, while she discusses the servant girl difficulty in the Freeman household.

I asked her if she has any solution of the problem to offer other harassed housekeepers.

"Oh, dear, no. I've never thought of such a thing. When I can't manage the situation myself, how can I hope to advise others?

"But do you know," she added, a sly twinkle coming into her china blue eyes, "do you know, I don't believe we'll be able to hire cooks at all after this young Holyoke College woman gets through her detective work. I think they'll all go on strike.

ENJOYED THE VAN VORSTS' FACTORY EXPERIENCE.

"Yes, I'm reading that college girl's experiences as a servant girl, and I find them immensely entertaining.

"I also read and liked the Misses Van Vorsts' book of factory experiences—that is, I think both these adventures are interesting reading, but as to how really valuable their information is I cannot say.

"Personally, I am doubtful.

"Neither the Hoyloke servant girl nor those literary factory hands seem to me to in any way solve the problems they set out to investigate. In fact, I do not believe that in either case anything but the most superficial understanding was accomplished.

"Putting on a cap and apron and working in a kitchen for ten years will not help the investigator to sound the depths of the domestic conditions. The college woman has an enlightened mind, and, moreover, she is looking forward to a reward of money and reputation when her term of bondage shall have expired.

"That in itself must lighten her labor indeed, that in itself must make her most sordid drudgery joyous. The same was true of the authors of the 'The Woman who Toils,' and for this reason I should think both experiences practically valueless as human documents.

"For instance, take the Lynn shoe workers described by Miss Marie Van Vorst. Now, I know nothing about the Lynn factory girl; but I do know the Brockton factory girl well, and unless two Massachusetts mill towns can be absolutely different in the average mentality and morality of their inhabitants, she has not succeeded in giving a very accurate delineation of character and life.

"In Brockton, as in the majority of New England manufacturing towns, daughters of the best people go into the mills quite as a matter of course, as girls of no better birth and no higher degree of intelligence and refinement go to teaching and to shorthand and typewriting in other sections of the country.

NEW ENGLAND MILL GIRL A HIGH TYPE.

"The New England mill girl, as I have found her through long acquaintance, is of a high order of intelligence, and her place in the mill is one of dignity—a place where she earns a living by hard work, but which is not without its compensations and its pleasures, the latter as legitimate and wholesome as any human being may be allowed to enjoy. It is silly—worse than silly, because so utterly useless—to pity people because they do not have the things which, from our point of view, are necessary to happiness.

"An appreciation of erudite poetry and of fine paintings is not at all necessary to the happiness of any human being, and it is upon just such a theory that the would-be student of the laboring masses pours out his or her well-meant but misplaced sympathy."

Miss Wilkins was then asked about the growing importance of the labor and other economic questions as material for the fiction writer.

"It is true," she replied.

"Everybody nowadays wants to discuss the labor question, and nearly everybody who writes thinks he can throw some light upon it, if not solve it, with one fell swoop in the pages of a novel.

"It has become the fad to dabble in economics, and men and women alike kill much otherwise valuable time 'sociologising.'

"The results are, as a rule, pitiful.

"We have stories and novels which have none of the solid charms of fiction and still less of the solid worth of facts.

HER TRIBUTE TO THE LATE FRANK NORRIS.

"Such results are misleading wherever they are not too hopelessly dull to be cast aside before reading.

"The stories of Frank Norris, especially his last, 'The Pit,' are glowing exceptions, because they show the hand of the literary artist. I did so enjoy that epic of wheat, and, poor fellow, he had to die."

"And about your own work?" the visitor inquired.

"Oh," responded the lady in the blue tailor gown, "I am writing every day during what time I can spare between breaking in new cooks. I have been doing nothing much more than short stories for a year or more. Some of these days I shall write a story about New Jersey life."

"Do you know that a story about New Jersey is full of romance, as full as it is of mosquitoes?

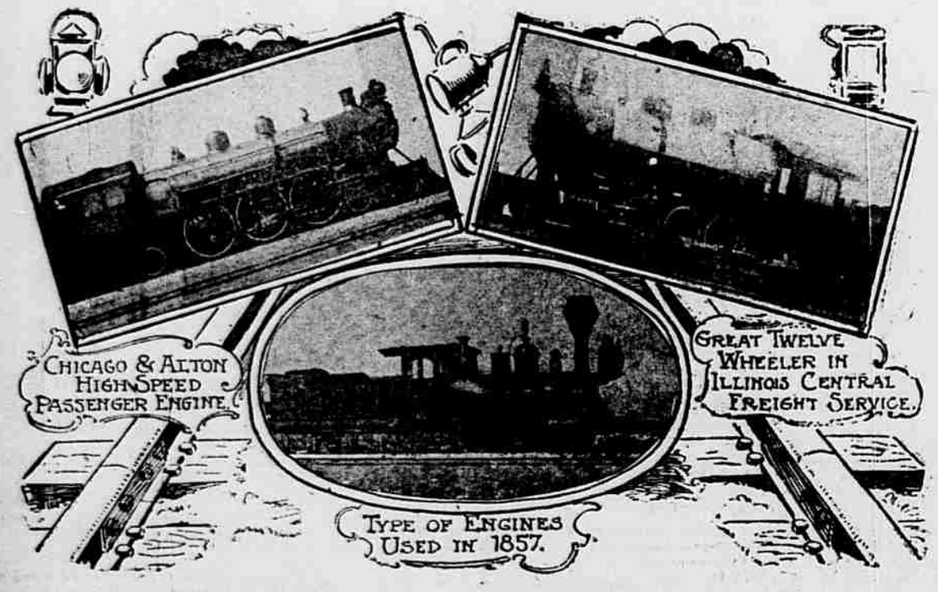
"Yes, indeed," declared the immortaliser of rural New England, rising to bid her visitor good-by, "if I'd been born and brought up in Metuchen I'd have found just as quaint and romantic people to write about here in Jersey as ever stepped through the pages of a New England story book.

"For people are all alike, especially if they happen to be women, whether they live in Massachusetts or Metuchen."

Which remark confirmed the bitter reflection of the cab driver.

"MOGUL" TRAFFIC MOVERS OF TO-DAY.

Improvement of Half a Century in Railroad Engines.



WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Under the great shed of Union Station panting monsters of steel and iron glide in almost every hour from "runs" of hundreds of miles.

A little oil is poured on their bearings, a wiper goes over the shining shaft, a nut is tightened, a screw adjusted, and they are ready once more for another trip.

Locomotives of the present day typify the essence of human ingenuity.

Economy is the factor which has had much to do with their existence.

Saving in coal, saving in time, saving in repairs, and a capacity to do more work at less expense are the guiding stars of the men who make these great traffic movers.

Slowly it has been realized that though it may require twice as much coal to give the Mogul, the Pacific or the Atlantic locomotive power to go a given distance as a cheap or old-time engine, still they can make the distance half again as fast, carry a train twice as heavy and at the end of the run need no repairs.

Because of the knowledge that a mistake will cost many human lives, the improvement in locomotives has been comparatively slow.

Theories were of but little use in railway engines.

Practical improvements were needed.

Less than fifty years ago an engine weighing fifty tons was regarded with awe.

Its wonderful speed of twenty miles an hour was commented upon, and its trains of ten or twelve freight cars were regarded as the acme of traffic possibilities.

Driving wheels from forty to fifty inches high carried these trains.

The smokestacks were often five feet high, and terminated in bulges from which the smoke poured in impressive volume.

Since the day of these "iron monsters" locomotive building has undergone a complete change.

Almost all things which were regarded as imperatively necessary have been found not only unnecessary, but in the way.

The small boiler has given place to huge boilers, often extending far back into the cab of the engineer.

The high smokestack has been cut down from 60 to 20 inches, and is almost completely lost to view behind the huge headlight.

Driving wheels are now from 80 to 84 inches in diameter and the fire box has been raised from the center of gravity to a degree which would have caused the old-timer to predict certain disaster.

The speed attained is from fifty to sixty miles an hour for hours at a time, and the trains hauled may be fifty heavy freight cars or a line of from twelve to fourteen heavy passenger cars, one of which would have stalled the engine of fifty years ago.

The weight of these engines is from 100 to 150 tons.

The Pacific locomotives of the Chicago and Alton weigh 219,000 pounds and have driving wheels 80 inches in diameter.

The new Burlington engines weigh 300,000 pounds and are what is known as the "Atlantic" type. Their driving wheels are 84 inches in diameter. Speed is the chief essential with them.

It is generally believed that the new engines of the Illinois Central are unequaled in their class. Especially is this said to be true of the twelve-wheel freight locomotives recently put into use by the company.

These locomotives weigh 232,000 pounds and are built for power.

One of the sights of Union Station is the great Big Four engine, No. 399, which weighs more than 100 tons and has a speed of seventy miles an hour.

The Wabash and the Iron Mountain also have several very large locomotives.

MAY FORBID SMOKING BY BOYS.

Employers Urge British Parliament Against Habit.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

An effort is being made to have the British Parliament enact legislation against cigarette smoking by boys. The warmest supporters of the measure are the employers of boys.

The boy smoker in the workshop is anything but popular with his master.

Sir James Reckitt has declared that he would certainly not choose a boy smoker to do any work for him if he could get a nonsmoker, and Sir Thomas Lipton has expressed the strongest disapproval of the practice.

Sir Christopher Furness has found that cigarette smoking among boys not only causes deterioration of physique, but "tends to develop lounging habits, with the result that the juvenile smoker's work is less conscientiously done, and he is lacking in sprightliness and alertness.

"Where, as is often the case," Sir Christopher adds, "the boy smokes clandestinely, habits of deceitfulness will probably be formed."

Sir George Williams's experience as an employer has conclusively proved to him that a boy is a far from satisfactory worker if he smokes, and he says: "The effects of smoking, with its tendency to encourage drinking, are to reduce a lad's energy, to lessen his intellectual capacity, and to weaken his moral character."

EVIL EFFECT ON THE MIND.

The fact that every great public school in England prohibits smoking among its boys, and punishes offenders with a strong hand, is eloquent of the evil effect tobacco has on the young mind, says the Westminster Budget.

The Leeds School Board some time ago enlisted the services of eminent medical authorities in its battle against the cigarette, and the Plymouth board circularized the teachers and parents of children on the subject.

A committee of the Liverpool School Board which investigated the matter declared that "cigarette smoking affects the system generally, and arrests physical development," and it would be possible to quote thousands of such opinions from the educational side.

It goes without saying that the doctor is the strongest enemy of the cigarette for boys. "All the evidence," says Doctor Andrew Wilson, "points to the undermining of a growing lad's physique by indulgence in tobacco," and Doctor Wilson continues:

"Add to this the moral effect—that of rendering the already precocious boy still more precocious, and of turning him into an insufferable prig, and you thus condemn the habit from another point of view."

ENCOURAGES LAXITY OF MORALS.

Sir Henry Littlejohn, the veteran medical officer of health for Edinburgh, has used his great influence against the boy smoker on many grounds, and there is much force in his argument that "the practice is fraught with dangers to society at large, owing to the secrecy with which the habit is carried on, the assembling at nights, the tendency to visit ice cream shops to assuage the heat of the mouth that has been engendered by the filthy practice; and in addition we have ultimately that disregard of the proprieties due the other sex which is introducing in our midst a laxity of morals, which, in the future, must bear fruit."

Years ago, long before the cigarette evil was as great as it is to-day, a minister of public instruction in Paris issued a circular to all directors of colleges and schools forbidding the use of tobacco by students because "the development of body and mind was checked by its immoderate use," and the general opinion as to the remedy for the evil in our own country is that the legislative prohibition of juvenile smoking is the only effective course.

Doctor Andrew Wilson has suggested corporal punishment in schools, but the simplest and surest remedy is that which is soon to come before the House of Commons, which will empower the magistrate to deal with the boy smoker.

Titled Persons Supported by American Millions.

American dollars are supporting 100 noble families of Europe at the present day.

Each family averages a million a year. The total sum which this country contributes to the maintenance of titles in Europe amounts to $100,000,000.

Each million represents the price which an American girl's father is paying for the nobility coveted by his daughter, says the Chicago Tribune. They also represent the restoration of ancient houses, the rejuvenation of old families and the rehabilitation of time-honored titles.

Pittsburg millions of the Thaw family are the latest to be sent on the missionary errand of saving the repute of a bankrupt English name.

When Miss Alice Thaw exchanged her millions for a title the impoverished house of Yarmouth, in Warwickshire, was placed out of trouble and the list of families thus succored reached an even hundred.

Through the New York Post Office alone last year more than $26,000,000, all of it in considerable sums, changed hands with foreign currency.

The United States is paying more money in this sort of tribute in a year to England than the American colonies could ever have dreamed of being forced to pay in a century.

The Thaw millions are the latest to find a resting place in England, and for this reason, as well as because of the prominence of the noble family rescued from want, the marriage is a fair illustration of the method employed in transferring wealth from America to England.

In addition to this recent case, the more notable ones are the marriages of Consuelo Vanderbilt to the Duke of Marlborough; that of Mrs. Bradley-Martin's daughter into the house of Craven; that of Miss Helen Morton to Count Boson de Perigord, and that of Anna Gould to Count Boni de Castellane.

DID JULIA MARLOWE POSE For the Heroine in "THE GREY CLOAK"?

The above is a reproduction of the frontispiece by Peirce in Harold MacGrath's new story, "The Grey Cloak." It represents the heroine at a very intense moment in her very [illegible] career, and so striking is the resemblance to Julia Marlowe in pose and expression that many of the illustrator's friends believe that he persuaded the beautiful actress to play "model" for him. Miss Marlowe has no greater than Mr. MacGrath, and it may be that he added his blandishments to the actress's request.